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SUBJECT: REQUIEM FOR A MIDDLEWEIGHT: THE CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRAT
NATIONAL PEASANT,S PARTY CONGRESS

¶1. (SBU) The Christian-Democrat National Peasant's Party (PNTCD) held its congress on January 21, electing Marian Milut as president to replace failed 2004 presidential candidate and current mayor of Timisoara, Gheorghe Ciuhandu. A businessman, Milut has had a unremarkable political career. In 2004, Milut was the Popular Alliance (AP) presidential Candidate, garnering less than one-half of a percent of the popular vote. (Note: The AP was a PNTCD splinter party following the PNTCD's loss in Parliament in 2000. End Note.) Milut returned to the PNTCD, and won a decisive victory over two PNTCD rivals at the 2007 Party Congress (522 votes versus 124 and 110 votes respectively). His platform called "PNTCD - European party" pledged to return the party to parliament in the 2008 general elections.

¶2. (SBU) Though PNTCD does not have a significant electoral following, it is a sentimental "favorite brand" for its role in the fierce political struggles of the early nineties. The PNTCD along with its former leader Corneliu Coposu, were the vanguard of anti-Communist opposition during the difficult political transition following Ceaucescu's fall. Because of its historical stature, both the Democratic Party (PD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) sent senior emissaries to the PNTCD convention in an attempt to woo PNTCD leaders and rank-and-file, reminiscent of the old political alliance that formed in the immediate post-communist period. Milut announced that he would work for rapprochement with the PM Tariceanu,s PNL.

What is the PNTCD?

¶3. (SBU) The PNTCD is not in the government, and only holds between one and two percent in the polls. It has a symbolic importance because the PNTCD is, along with Tariceanu,s PNL, one of the "historical parties" of Romania. PNTCD following the 1989 revolution was the first registered party and the primary anti-communist opposition party. It was the driving force of the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), the alliance of anti-communist parties that formed the main parliamentary opposition between 1992 and 1996, and then formed the 1996-2000 government, within which the PNTCD was the dominant party. Following a series of harsh political reforms initiated by the PNTCD, and the loss of their rural based constituency, the party lost its parliamentary representation in 2000, and has not recovered.

¶4. (SBU) Following its 2000 defeat, the PNTCD was abandoned by many of its leaders who formed various splinter parties, such as the Popular Alliance (AP) which was initiated and led by the PNTCD-supported president Emil Constantinescu (1996-2000). Although its orientation is similar to those of the Democratic Party (PD), the PD is blamed for taking much of the PNTCD constituency.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: There are serious doubts on whether Milut can lead the party back to Parliament in 2008. The PNTCD's appeal to Tariceanu is probably its last gasp for relevancy before fading away. End Comment.

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